

Greek Life at WVWC: An Overview

Greek life at West Virginia Wesleyan College is a prominent part of student involvement on campus and has been since its origination. Wesleyan has always been a campus centered around its values and its people. Students have remained heavily involved in various organizations and teams which unites the campus. Greek Life has been a major contributor to the extracurricular involvement on campus and continues to be a strong connection for students. Since its beginning, Greek life at West Virginia Wesleyan has had its own unique atmosphere and differs from the Greek stereotype sought out at other college campuses. Greek life here holds true to its values as well as Wesleyan's values. It is centered around campus and community involvement, philanthropy, and academics. Most importantly though, it connects students beyond the four years they are here, as well as connecting the past to the present. It is considered an honor to be invited to join such an organization and today it is used to not only socialize but to expand your leadership skills, volunteer in the community, and grow your network. I believe many things on Wesleyan's campus is different than any other college, with Greek life being a major one.

Greek life at Wesleyan unofficially began in 1921 when Sigma Delta Chi was first established. Sigma Delta Chi was originally organized in 1921 by a small group of women students and was the first of its kind on campus. Professor Mildred Little advised the group of girls and helped them later become recognized as a local sorority in February 1926. They hosted many social affairs and initiated a total of thirty members

in the first year. Sigma Delta Chi Sorority strived to uphold the same values and ideals of West Virginia Wesleyan College and led the way for Greek life today at Wesleyan. The first men's fraternity established on campus had more of a difficult start. In 1923, Chi Alpha Tau was organized as a club and composed of four members, with the purpose of creating a homelike atmosphere with social advantages. John Little was the first president and led the club through its first year gaining four new members with a total of eight. At this time there was a ban on fraternities at Wesleyan and their close similarities to fraternities raised concern to faculty who asked them to disband following this close of the school year. However, Trustees lifted the ban on fraternities and Chi Alpha Tau was given permission to become the first official fraternity on campus in 1925 (M1927).

Following the lift on the ban, there was an influx of fraternities being established including: Sigma Eta Delta, Alpha Gamma Phi, and Kappa Alpha Order. Each of the fraternities went to have their own histories on campus, many went on to affiliate with national fraternities, some have more complicated paths including different mergers, and some remained true to themselves until the end. Although all very different, their own individual stories all led to what we know as Greek life at Wesleyan today.

Sigma Eta Delta was the second local fraternity founded on campus in 1925 and the first one to affiliate with a national fraternity that we still have today, Theta Chi which was founded in 1950 (Brett). The third fraternity founded was Alpha Gamma Phi, a local fraternity that only lasted about 4 years. It was established in 1927, but never affiliated with a national fraternity and couldn't gain the momentum to be sustainable. However,

our Giant, Nicholas Hyma was their faculty advisor for the time they were established. On the other hand, the fourth fraternity founded at Wesleyan was Kappa Alpha Order, a national fraternity and the only fraternity to remain the same without affiliating or merging with another during its time on campus. It also considered to be the oldest on campus without changing as it was founded in 1929. The fifth fraternity, and the start of a complicated history, was Alpha Kappa Pi in 1933. It was a national fraternity that merged with Chi Alpha Tau, the first local fraternity founded on campus (M1934). The same year it merged with Alpha Kappa Pi, Chi Alpha Tau became the Beta Nu chapter of Alpha Sigma Phi in 1946. Then in 1951, a new fraternity was founded called Phi Sigma Epsilon. It later nationally merged with Phi Sigma Kappa on a 50/50 vote that was decided by the national president. Since the vote was so close, this divided the chapter at Wesleyan which led to a split and Phi Sigma Phi was formed as a result. John Bohman was the last President of Phi Sigma Epsilon before the split and later went into national leadership of the fraternity. Upon finding out the lack of insurance for the fraternity, he decided to merge the two chapters, Phi Sigma Epsilon and Phi Sigma Phi back together and rechartered Alpha Sigma Phi in 1998, which had previously lost its charter due to social responsibility and liability issues. Since then Alpha Sigma Phi has remained apart of Wesleyan's Greek life (John Bohman).

The last two fraternities founded which led to present day fraternities were Kappa Sigma Kappa in 1955 and Delta Xi in 1961. Kappa Sigma Kappa was a local fraternity that later affiliated with the national fraternity, Theta Xi, in 1962 (Brett). Delta Xi was also a local fraternity, but it was founded with the hopes of affiliating with a national fraternity.

In 1965, they became the Delta Xi colony of Chi Phi and fulfilled their hopes of affiliating with a national fraternity (M1966). There was a total of thirteen fraternities both local and national founded throughout the history of Greek life at Wesleyan, some histories more complicated than the others, but they all led to what we know today.

Sorority history on campus was much less complicated though. Sorority life on campus led to the start of Greek life. Although the sorority, Sigma Delta Chi wasn't founded as a local sorority until 1926, it was first established in 1921 and paved the way for social Greek organizations on campus. Sigma Delta Chi was also the first to affiliate with a national sorority, Alpha Xi Delta in 1947 (M1948). Kappa Phi Omega was the second sorority founded on campus and later affiliated with Alpha Delta Pi in 1948 (M1949). Sigma Pi Delta was the third sorority founded on campus and affiliated with Alpha Gamma Delta also in 1948 (M1949). A lot of change occurred in the late 1940's early 50's for Greek life at Wesleyan, both sororities and fraternities began affiliating with national organizations and you can see the switch to what we recognize today as Greek life at Wesleyan.

Chi Kappa Alpha was the fourth sorority founded on campus, however, it never affiliated with a national sorority and only lasted from 1926 to 1934 (M1927 and M1935). For a while, there were only three sororities recognized on campus, until 1961 when Tau Omega Chi was founded. This was a local sorority that only lasted two years until it affiliated with Zeta Tau Alpha in 1963 (Brett). Since every other sorority on campus at this time was a nationally recognized sorority, Tau Omega Chi quickly affiliated in order to compete with the other sororities for pledges and remain sustainable. Following the

founding of Tau Omega Chi and the affiliation with Zeta Tau Alpha, no new sorority has been founded since then and only four sororities have remained on campus for the past fifty years.

Greek life has continued to remain a significant part of student life on campus. Both fraternities and sororities have been successful, and the future of Greek life remains hopeful. Although Greek life has remained successful over the years, the atmosphere has not always been the same. According to John Bohman, the current Director of Greek Life, when he was a student on campus from 1985-1989, the atmosphere of Greek life was completely different. Fraternities and sororities were heavily focused on the social aspect. Fraternities often operated life bars and could charge at the door. Rules were not in place or held to a high standard which eventually led to civil lawsuits and nationwide laws were put in place to prevent dangers that could arise from the free flowing of alcohol and hazing that was prevalent on campus at the time. Since then, the other aspects of philanthropy, service, and academics have risen and become a major part of Greek life on campus today. Greeks now hold the records for highest GPA on campus, often beating the overall student average and breaking personal records every semester. Greeks on campus also continue to strive to break community service and philanthropic records, participating in community service projects both in individual chapters and has a Greek community. According to Bohman, Greek used to average around 2,000 hours of community service total, but now we are reaching as high as 13,000 to 14,000 hours.

As far as the social aspect, Bohman has put into effect rules and guidelines to keep each organization on track. Specifically, he has created the President's Cup which guides each organization to strive to meet specific goals in each category of academics, service, philanthropy, and campus involvement. This has transformed the atmosphere of Greek life on campus and guided how Greek organizations represent themselves and how other students view Greek life.

Since its founding in the early 1920's, Greek life has become a major part of Wesleyan's campus. Although over the years there have been many changes and significant transformations, Greek life has always held up to the values and traditions of campus life. It has been a way for students to become more involved not only on Wesleyan's campus but throughout the Buckhannon community. Unlike many other schools, Wesleyan's Greek life strays from the stereotypical Greek image and is portrayed in a new light that has allowed it to flourish into the organization they are today. Greek life has been a successful part of Wesleyan's overall history and will continue to thrive, breaking records and making more history.